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¶2. Court Supports Residents' Rights
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Pension Funds Basing in Belgium

¶1. (U) Belgium is tailoring its legislation to attract the European and international pension fund business. Starting with EU Directive 2003/41, Belgium adopted legislation last fall to facilitate cross-border institutional pension and retirement fund activities, and is working on additional laws. These include setting minimal prudential rules such funds must meet, alitting multinational cpe their pension fund managers Belgium regardless of thei. A zero-taxation schenn. By hosting these lptors, Brussels hopes to expertise of its financial , and hopes to deepen ththat trade in Brussels Financial trading center larger venues. At presenth(##)infractions and finr continued use of a frmits infractions (refs Ament, to take effect as oQms that citizen groupsemand penalt ies for notions.

------------Belgium: A Kyoto Progress------------------

¶3. (mmission told Belgium greenhouse gas emssion quotas on their industries. Belgium was told to cut the CO2 permits it issues to Belgian industry by 7.5 percent, permitting only 58.5 million tons annually, not the 63.3 million tons the government proposes to issue. Witout such an adjustment Belgium risks missing Qts Kyoto target; end-2005 data showed the coutry had increased CO2 emissions by 2 percent rather than reduced them to 7.6 percent under the 1990 benchmark. Regional environmental and political leaders complain that industry hQs already been pressed hard, and worry that further cuts will cost industry both money and jobs. The release of the UN's Inter-government Panel on Climate Change verifying that global warming is both real and man-made bolstered Belgian public support for tighter emissions controls, however. (ref C)

US Company a Climate Saver

4.(U) The WWF's "climate saver" program cited US Nike company in Belgium as a model participant. This new voluntary group of 12 leading multinational companies agreed to achieve an annual 10 million ton reduction of CO2 among themselves. Among the six US companies in the group, Nike Sports Equipment was portrayed by a Belgian WWF officer as a model corporate citizen. Its newly expanded distribution center in Lakdaal, Flanders, features designed-in "green" technology and windmills to provide a large share of its electric consumption ? CO2-free of course.

Belgium: Less Than a Good European

¶5. (U) Charlie McCreevy, the EU Commissioner for Internal market and Services, released on February 1 his annual scorecard of EU-wide implementation of the Commission's directives, and Belgium fared poorly. The average number of un-implemented EU directives among the member states is 1.2 percent, the lowest percentage ever. Belgium, however, has failed to transpose into national legislation 1.5 percent of the 1,634 EU directives tracked. The country thus ranks in 20th place out of 25, while notorious Euro-sceptics such as the UK and Denmark actually have much better scores. In terms of infringement procedures running against it (the EU mechanism to enforce delinquent member-state compliance), Belgium scores little better: there are 68 infringement procedures recorded, placing Belgium 19 out of 25 in compliance. Analysts blame Belgium's multi-layered federal structure, where new directives (e.g., on the environment) need to be approved by regional parliaments, for Belgium's poor record. The poor score does not square with Belgium's openly proclaimed allegiance to the EU and all things European.

Belgian Chocolate a Controlled-Origin Name?

¶6. (U) Belgium's chocolate and confection trade industry group Choprabisco is moving to have Belgian chocolate treated like wine: a controlled origin denomination. No less than Chianti having to come from that region of Italy, Belgian chocolate should be of Belgian origin, they believe. Currently the product risks becoming a generic name. In coordination with Belgian export authorities, Choprabisco is proposing a code for use of the terminology "Belgian Chocolate." EU legislation is amenable to this, and controlled use of geographical indicators like sherry and champagne is well established. Outside Europe such regulation is far weaker; Belgium's confection sector, with an annual turnover of 4.1 billion euros (US$5.3 billion) of which 68 percent is from exports (see ref D), already faces indiscriminate use of the term "Belgian" or outright counterfeiting of products in Canada, Japan and China.

Brussels Casino Wins Big

¶7. (U) While the Brussels Casino marked its one year anniversary January 19, the biggest celebration may be on account of its phenomenal success after just one year. In 2006, more than 250,000 visitors placed bets and played the slots, netting the casino some 25 million euros. On an international scale, this places the

Brussels Casino in 11th place out of 75 casinos ranked by Casino Austria International, an organization that compiles data from 17 countries. During an average day, the Brussels Casino receives 700 visitors. The average gambler is 42 years old and spends 101 euros per visit. For 2007, the casino plans to expand beyond its current 22 tables and 208 slot machines and to stay open until 5 a.m., one hour later than the current closing time. The casino is also paying off big for the city of Brussels: in addition to employing 261 workers, the casino pays 250,000 euros in annual rent to the city and contributes a 44 percent business tax to the Brussels region.

The Grinch Who Stole Carnival------------------------
¶8. (U) Federal Minister of Transportation Renaat Landuyt, in between filing court cases against Brussels Airport noise opponents, has found a truly pressing matter of public safety: regulating the floats in Carnival parades. He is proposing amendments to four laws on the books that could result in police citations being given to the many carnival floats and decorated carts that snake through Belgian cities like Binche, Malmedy and Stavelot as part of the pre-Lent Mardi Gras tradition. These unlicensed vehicles have apparently caught the eye of the Minister. The legislative procedure to implement the new regulations, however, means they will only come into effect in four months... well after Easter.

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